

# Xavier Becerra

**Xavier Becerra** (/hɑːˈviːˈɛər biːsərə/, *hah-vee-air*; born January 26, 1958) is an American politician and lawyer serving as the 33rd and current Attorney General of California since 2017. He previously was a member of the United States House of Representatives, representing Downtown Los Angeles in Congress from 1993 to 2017. Becerra, a member of the Democratic Party, was Chairman of the House Democratic Caucus from 2013 to 2017.

Born in Sacramento, California, to Mexican parents, Becerra is a graduate of Stanford University, receiving his Juris Doctor from Stanford Law School. He worked as a lawyer at the Legal Assistance Corporation of central Massachusetts, before returning to California in 1986 to work as an administrative assistant for state senator Art Torres. He served as a deputy attorney general in the California Department of Justice from 1987 to 1990, before he was elected to the California State Assembly, where he served one term from 1990 to 1992.

Becerra was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1992, representing California's 30th congressional district from 1993 to 2003, California's 31st congressional district from 2003 to 2013 and California's 34th congressional district from 2013 to 2017. During his tenure, he served as Chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus from 1997 to 1999, Vice Chairman of the House Democratic Caucus from 2009 to 2013 and as a member of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction. Becerra is also a member of the Inter-American Dialogue think tank, based in Washington, D.C. <sup>[1]</sup>

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### Xavier Becerra



### 33rd Attorney General of California

#### Incumbent

#### Assumed office

January 24, 2017

**Governor**  Jerry Brown  
 Gavin Newsom

**Preceded by**  Kamala Harris

### Member of the U.S. House of Representatives from California

#### In office

January 3, 1993 – January 24, 2017

**Preceded by**  Edward Roybal  
(Redistricting)

**Succeeded by**  Jimmy Gomez

**Constituency**  30th district (1993–2003)  
 31st district (2003–2013)  
 34th district (2013–2017)

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## Early life, education, and law career

Born in Sacramento, California, Becerra is the son of working-class immigrants from Jalisco, Mexico.<sup>[2]</sup> As a young child Becerra grew up in a one-room apartment with his three sisters.<sup>[3]</sup> He graduated in 1976 from C.K. McClatchy High School, located in the center of Sacramento.<sup>[4]</sup> He studied abroad at the University of Salamanca in Salamanca, Spain, from 1978 to 1979, before earning his B.A. in economics from Stanford University in 1980, becoming the first person in his family to graduate from college.<sup>[5][6]</sup> He received his Juris Doctor from Stanford Law School in 1984 and was admitted to the State Bar of California in 1985.<sup>[7]</sup> He was initially a lawyer, working on cases involving individuals who had mental disorders for the Legal Assistance Corporation of Central Massachusetts.<sup>[8]</sup>

## Early political career

Becerra worked as an Administrative Assistant for California State Senator Art Torres in 1986.<sup>[9]</sup> He served as a Deputy Attorney General in the California Department of Justice under Attorney General John Van de Kamp from 1987 to 1990.<sup>[10]</sup>

After incumbent State Assemblyman Charles Calderon decided to seek a seat in the California Senate, Becerra launched a grassroots campaign for the California State Assembly, defeating Calderon's Senate aide Marta Maestas in the Democratic primary.<sup>[11]</sup> He later went on to defeat Republican Lee Lieberg and Libertarian Steven Pencall, receiving 60% of the vote.<sup>[12]</sup> Becerra served one term in the State Assembly, representing California's 59th district, from 1990 to 1992.<sup>[13]</sup>

## U.S. House of Representatives

### Elections

<b><u>Chair of the House Democratic Caucus</u></b>	
<b>In office</b>	
January 3, 2013 – January 3, 2017	
<b>Leader</b>	<u>Nancy Pelosi</u>
<b>Preceded by</b>	<u>John Larson</u>
<b>Succeeded by</b>	<u>Joe Crowley</u>
<b><u>Vice Chair of the House Democratic Caucus</u></b>	
<b>In office</b>	
January 3, 2009 – January 3, 2013	
<b>Leader</b>	<u>Nancy Pelosi</u>
<b>Preceded by</b>	<u>John Larson</u>
<b>Succeeded by</b>	<u>Joe Crowley</u>
<b><u>House Democratic Assistant to the Leader</u></b>	
<b>In office</b>	
January 3, 2007 – January 3, 2009	
<b>Leader</b>	<u>Nancy Pelosi</u>
<b>Preceded by</b>	<u>John Spratt</u>
<b>Succeeded by</b>	<u>Chris Van Hollen</u>
<b><u>Member of the California State Assembly from the 59th district</u></b>	
<b>In office</b>	
1990–1992	
<b>Preceded by</b>	<u>Charles Calderon</u>
<b>Succeeded by</b>	<u>Dick Mountjoy</u>
<b>Personal details</b>	
<b>Born</b>	January 26, 1958 <div><u>Sacramento, California, U.S.</u></div>
<b>Political party</b>	<u>Democratic</u>
<b>Spouse(s)</b>	<u>Carolina Reyes</u>
<b>Children</b>	3
<b>Education</b>	<u>Stanford University</u> (BA, JD)
<b>Website</b>	<u>Government website</u> ( <u>http://oag.ca.gov</u> )

In 1992, 25th District Congressman Edward Roybal announced his retirement after 30 years in Congress. Becerra entered the race for the seat, which had been renumbered as the 30th district after redistricting.

He won the Democratic primary with a plurality of 32% of the vote.<sup>[14]</sup> In the general election, he defeated Republican nominee Morry Waksberg 58%–24%.<sup>[15]</sup>

In 1994, he won re-election to a second term with 66%,<sup>[16]</sup>%. His district was renumbered as the 31st district after the 2000 census.

After redistricting, ahead of the 2012 elections, most of Becerra's old district became the 34th district. Becerra announced he would run there; it includes his home.<sup>[17]</sup> He defeated Republican Stephen Smith 85.6% to 14.4%.



Xavier Becerra, Robert Matsui, and Elijah Cummings at a press conference on civil rights in 1997

## Tenure

Becerra was a prominent member of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, of which he served as chairman during the 105th Congress.<sup>[18]</sup> He was featured on The Colbert Report's Better Know a District on August 17, 2006.<sup>[19]</sup>

On September 29, 2008, Becerra voted against the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 because he "wanted to see direct protections for responsible homeowners" in the bill.<sup>[20]</sup>

Becerra considered running for Democratic Caucus Vice Chair for the 110th Congress; however, he deferred to John Larson when DCCC chairman Rahm Emanuel decided to run for Caucus Chair, the position Larson had been running for. Instead, Becerra was appointed assistant to the Speaker of the House for the 110th Congress.

Before the opening of the 111th Congress, Emanuel accepted a position as White House Chief of Staff in the Obama Administration. Larson succeeded Emanuel as caucus chair, and Becerra won his bid to succeed Larson as Vice-Chair. He defeated Marcy Kaptur of Ohio by a vote of 175–67.<sup>[21]</sup>

In 2011, Becerra successfully ran for a second-term as Vice-Chair to serve during the 112th Congress.

During the 111th Congress and 112th Congress, Becerra served on several high-profile committees. On March 24, 2010, Becerra was appointed to serve on the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform (often called Bowles-Simpson/Simpson-Bowles). On August 11, 2011, Becerra was selected to serve on the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction (also known as the Super Committee). And on December 23, 2011, Becerra was appointed to serve on a bicameral conference committee to find bipartisan solutions on the middle class tax cuts, unemployment insurance, and the Medicare physician payment rate.

## Taxes

Becerra consistently expressed opposition to Social Security and Medicare cuts and tax provisions seen to benefit outsourcers.<sup>[22]</sup> He argued against the Job Protection Act and Recession Prevention Act of 2012 which would extend certain tax provisions enacted in 2001 and 2003 under G.W. Bush, on which Becerra voted against despite it passing through the House.<sup>[23]</sup> He consistently voted against budget plans that would protect tax cuts for higher income brackets by cutting Medicare, Medicaid, SNAP, and

certain federal services.<sup>[24]</sup> He supported legislation like the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012. Please note citations 22, 23 and 24 reference statements by Xavier Becerra and therefore any editorializing is suspect.

## Immigration

Immigration is a pertinent issue for Becerra because of California's proximity to the border and its large number of undocumented immigrants. Becerra was a strong supporter of the DREAM Act and comprehensive immigration reform.<sup>[25]</sup> Becerra supported the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program put in place by President Obama.<sup>[26]</sup>

## Women's issues

Becerra is strongly pro-choice and favors legal abortion up to the third trimester. On May 31, 2012, Becerra voted against H.R. 3541, the Prenatal Non-Discrimination Act (PRENDA), which would have imposed civil and criminal penalties on anyone knowingly attempting to perform a sex-selective abortion. The bill also would have required health care providers to report known or suspected violations to law enforcement, including suspicions about a woman's motives for seeking an abortion.<sup>[27]</sup> Becerra received a 100% rating from Planned Parenthood and NARAL Pro-Choice America in 2012.<sup>[28][29]</sup> Becerra voted in favor of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009 which made the 180-day statute of limitations for filing an equal-pay lawsuit regarding pay discrimination reset with each new paycheck affected by that discriminatory action.<sup>[30][31]</sup>

## Committee assignments

- Committee on Ways and Means
  - Subcommittee on Oversight
  - Subcommittee on Health
  - Subcommittee on Social Security
- Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction

## Caucus memberships

- Congressional Hispanic Caucus (Former Chair)
- Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus
- Congressional Progressive Caucus

## Party leadership

Becerra considered running for Democratic Caucus Vice Chair for the 110th Congress; however, he deferred to John Larson when Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee chairman Rahm Emanuel decided to run for Caucus Chair, the position Larson had been running for. Instead, Becerra was appointed assistant to the Speaker of the House for the 110th Congress.

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## Other political ambitions

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### Los Angeles mayoral election, 2001

Becerra ran for mayor of Los Angeles in 2001. He finished with 6 percent of the primary vote, finishing behind businessman Steve Soboroff, Councilman Joel Wachs, former California State Assembly Speaker Antonio Villaraigosa, and the eventual winner, then-City Attorney James Hahn.

### Obama administration

On January 27, 2008, Becerra endorsed U.S. Senator Barack Obama for President.<sup>[33]</sup>

Becerra was considered for the position of U.S. Trade Representative in the administration of President-elect Obama. While it was reported that he had already accepted,<sup>[34]</sup> on December 15, 2008, he announced that he would not accept the position.<sup>[35]</sup>

## California Attorney General

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On December 1, 2016, Becerra accepted Governor Jerry Brown's offer to be the Attorney General of California. On January 23, 2017, the California Legislature confirmed Becerra to the post. He succeeded Kamala Harris, who was elected to the United States Senate.<sup>[36]</sup>

On January 24, 2017, Becerra was sworn in as the Attorney General of California, becoming the first Latino to serve as Attorney General.<sup>[37]</sup>

On March 28, 2017, Becerra brought 14 felony charges against The Center for Medical Progress activists for recording 14 videos (see Planned Parenthood 2015 undercover videos controversy), and 1 felony charge for conspiring to invade privacy.<sup>[38]</sup> The charges were dismissed by a California Superior Court judge in June for not stating the names of those recorded and the specific dates of the recordings;<sup>[39]</sup> the charges were refiled with the names and dates in July 2017.<sup>[40]</sup>



Xavier Becerra speaking to the California Democratic Party State Convention in 2019

In 2018, Becerra was elected to a full four-year term after defeating Republican challenger Steven Bailey and securing 61 percent of the vote.<sup>[41][42]</sup>

On January 29, 2019, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) announced Becerra would deliver the Spanish-language Democratic response to President Trump's State of the Union address on February 5, 2019.<sup>[43]</sup>

In 2019, Becerra threatened reporters who had received records of California law enforcement officers who had been convicted of crimes in the past decade.<sup>[44]</sup>

In February 2019, Becerra, Governor Gavin Newsom, and 15 other states had filed a lawsuit against the Trump Administration over the President's declaration of a national emergency to fund a wall at the southern U.S. border.<sup>[45]</sup> As of September 26, 2019, Becerra has sued the Trump administration 62 times in total.<sup>[46]</sup>

Despite the multiple lawsuits against the Trump administration filed with other state attorney generals, Becerra has not joined antitrust efforts against any of the major tech companies. His office would not disclose whether it is examining any tech company and had not endorsed any joint investigations with other states.<sup>[47]</sup>

In December 2019, the Trump administration opened 1 million acres in California to fracking and drilling.<sup>[48]</sup> Under the new policy, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposed beginning new lease sales for oil and gas extraction along "California's Central Valley and Central Coast, touching eight counties and includes 400,000 acres of public land."<sup>[49]</sup> California officials and agencies, including Becerra, filed a lawsuit against BLM in January 2020,<sup>[50][49]</sup>

## Personal life

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Becerra is married to physician Carolina Reyes<sup>[51]</sup> and has three children.

## See also

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- List of Hispanic and Latino Americans in the United States Congress

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## External links

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- California Department of Justice (<https://oag.ca.gov/>) official website of the Attorney General
- Campaign website (<https://xavierbecerra.com/>)
- Xavier Becerra ([https://curlie.org/Regional/North\\_America/United\\_States/California/Government/Federal/US\\_House\\_of\\_Representatives/Xavier\\_Becerra\\_%5BD-34%5D](https://curlie.org/Regional/North_America/United_States/California/Government/Federal/US_House_of_Representatives/Xavier_Becerra_%5BD-34%5D)) at Curlie
- 
- Biography (<http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=b000287>) at the *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*
- Profile (<https://www.votesmart.org/candidate/26754>) at Vote Smart
- Financial information (federal office) (<https://www.fec.gov/data/candidate/H2CA30143>) at the Federal Election Commission
- Legislation sponsored (<https://www.congress.gov/member/xavier-becerra/70>) at the Library of Congress

California Assembly		
Preceded by <u>Charles Calderon</u>	Member of the <u>California Assembly</u> from the <u>59th district</u> 1990–1992	Succeeded by <u>Dick Mountjoy</u>
U.S. House of Representatives		
Preceded by <u>Marty Martínez</u>	Member of the <u>U.S. House of Representatives</u> from <u>California's 30th congressional district</u> 1993–2003	Succeeded by <u>Henry Waxman</u>
Preceded by <u>Ed Pastor</u>	Chair of the <u>Congressional Hispanic Caucus</u> 1997–1999	Succeeded by <u>Lucille Roybal-Allard</u>
Preceded by <u>Hilda Solis</u>	Member of the <u>U.S. House of Representatives</u> from <u>California's 31st congressional district</u> 2003–2013	Succeeded by <u>Gary Miller</u>
Preceded by <u>Lucille Roybal-Allard</u>	Member of the <u>U.S. House of Representatives</u> from <u>California's 34th congressional district</u> 2013–2017	Succeeded by <u>Jimmy Gomez</u>
Party political offices		
Preceded by <u>John Spratt</u>	<u>House Democratic Assistant to the Leader</u> 2007–2009	Succeeded by <u>Chris Van Hollen</u>
Preceded by <u>John Larson</u>	<u>Vice Chair of the House Democratic Conference</u> 2009–2013	Succeeded by <u>Joe Crowley</u>
	<u>Chair of the House Democratic Conference</u> 2013–2017	
Legal offices		
Preceded by <u>Kathleen Kenealy</u> Acting	<u>Attorney General of California</u> 2017–present	Incumbent

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